

## **Jopper Holiday One-Shots by Madame\_Ashley**

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**Relationships:** Joyce Byers & Jim "Chief" Hopper

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**Summary:**

A series of holiday-themed one-shots inspired by a cool Tumblr prompt list by justablobfish.

# 1. Chapter 1

## December 1: Winter Expectations vs. Winter Reality

It's the most wonderful time of the year, or so the cloying song over the intercom would have one believe. Joyce is trying to be jovial, jolly, generous; but just two hours into her shift she is already feeling a few fa-la-la-la's shy of a figgy pudding.

Christmas is supposed to bring out the best in people, but today's shoppers have been doing little to suppress the ugly side of human behaviour. Two grown men have almost come to blows over the last holiday Barbie. Half a dozen customers have hollered at Joyce over price discrepancies at the checkout counter.

Following one of the hollering episodes, a kindly – if a bit dotty – old lady approached Joyce and assured her that she was doing a great job, no matter what any of those “rattlesnakes” said; Joyce almost hugged her. That is, until the well-intentioned senior citizen patted the younger woman's hand and told her to “wish Lonnie and those little ones a Merry Christmas.” With the day she's been having, the mere mention of her lousy ex's name is enough to make her gag.

Joyce does a quick scan to ensure that Donald isn't lurking around, then heads outside for a smoke. On her way towards the back door, Hopper wanders out of an aisle into her path, and as casual as he is trying to appear, this encounter is clearly no accident. For one, he's dressed for work, and knowing the effect that his uniform has on her, he has no business showing up at the store unannounced and looking sexy as hell. It doesn't help that he's in that authoritative stance of his, legs apart, hands on hips. She can't decide whether to smack him or kiss him; either reaction would probably turn him on.

Hopper takes a small container of silver objects off of a nearby rack and Joyce rolls her eyes, anticipating the terrible joke to come. Shaking the box he says innocently, “Excuse me, miss, but I'm wondering if you could tell me about your best screw?”

“God, Hop, that one was especially bad – and predictable,” she groans, even as she's smiling from ear to ear. “Besides, that's really a

question for the hardware department..." Joyce has gotten so distracted by the hot look in Hopper's eyes that her attempt at coyness has given him another opportunity for naughty wordplay.

"Well, the funny thing is that hardware is my department..." he begins, but Joyce -struggling to keep a straight face - places a finger firmly over his lips. Convinced that he's been subdued, she removes her hand. Hopper is very pleased with himself. "I'm going to need you to come out back for questioning."

They share a smoke in the alley, and Hopper is on his best behaviour. The last thing Joyce needs today is her nosy co-workers finding out that she and the Chief of police are an item. She takes a drag and tells Jim about the rampant selfishness and grumpiness she's witnessed during this so-called happy holiday.

"People's traditions are so weird," Joyce observes, leaning against the wall of the building. Seizing his opportunity, Hopper moves forward, tossing the cigarette aside. Putting one hand on her waist and the other on the wall, he bends to kiss her hard on the mouth. Joyce can feel herself melting, but she really must get back to work, and presses him away gently. Both pleased and self-conscious about the warmth of whisker burn around her lips she murmurs, "Mmmm. That was unexpected."

"Not at all. It's tradition," Hopper explains, smirking. Following his gaze, Joyce sees that his hand is pinning a sprig of mistletoe to the wall just above their heads. "People's traditions are so weird, right?"

## 2. Chapter 2

December 2: We need to buy you winter clothing

The sky is dark and overcast but the air is too cold for snow. A December wind is blowing just hard enough to rattle the windows in the Chevy as Hopper turns into the school parking lot. He spies the slight, shivering form of Will Byers standing by the front door of the building, and pulls up to the curb. Reaching across the front seat and rolling down the passenger side window, he calls out, “Hey, kid, Jonathan got called into work, so your mom asked me to come get you.”

Will is hugging his arms across his chest to preserve body heat, the overlong sleeves of his coat flapping against his small body. He manages a sweet smile in spite of his chattering teeth. “Sir, I can’t go with you unless you tell me the password.”

Hopper’s brow furrows, a combination of confusion and concern. “What? Come on, Will, it’s freezing out there. Just get in.”

“Mom says I can’t get into a car with anyone but her or Jonathan unless they know the password.” The kid can’t be serious.

Jim shakes his head and sighs. “All right. The password is ‘get in the goddamn truck.’”

Will bursts out laughing. “That’s exactly what Mom said you would say! I totally knew you were coming – Mom left a message with the office.” He climbs into the passenger seat and rolls up the window against the bitter wind.

Hopper notices that the boy’s coat is at least two sizes too big, with a small tear on the shoulder. The sight of the ill-fitting hand-me-down calls to mind Joyce’s words, “People make fun of him...of his clothes.” Jim hadn’t really understood it at the time, but then, he’d grown up in a household where he’d never had to worry about getting what he needed. Making a decision on impulse, he steers the Chevy out of the parking lot and heads in the direction of downtown.

“Chief, where are you going?” Will exclaims, with a nervous smile. “Our place is the other way.”

“We’re going to get you a decent coat, Will.”

Out of the corner of his eye, Hopper can see that Will’s face has brightened. “I already have a coat, sir,” the boy says. It’s evident that Joyce’s pride has been rubbing off.

“This “Chief” and “sir” stuff isn’t really necessary, is it? I’m not your boss, and you’re not under arrest, so...”

“Okay, Hop. Whatever you say, sir.” The boy is beaming now, so content with the simplest of pleasures: a warm ride on a cold day, the prospect of a new winter coat, Hopper’s somewhat grumpy company. In all the time that Jim has been visiting the Byers’ house – even occasionally spending the night – he and Will haven’t had many one-on-one conversations. “How was school?” he asks, hoping the question doesn’t sound too forced. Hopper’s awkwardness is unwarranted; Will loves to talk and once he gets started, it’s all Hopper can do to get a word in.

They soon find themselves in the children’s section of Hawkins Department Store. Will peruses the racks, occasionally glancing up at Hopper with an apprehensive expression on his face. “Which one should I pick?”

“Which one do you want?” The salespeople are giving Hopper curious looks, and whispering amongst themselves. Every time he hears Will being referred to as “Lonnie’s boy,” his blood boils and his heart aches. This kid deserves better than his useless father and this unforgiving town.

Will gestures toward a dark green bomber-style coat. “I like this one the best. It looks a bit like yours.” The boy picks up the sleeve to check the price tag but Hopper stops him.

“Don’t worry about that, okay? If it fits, we’ll take it.”

Ten minutes later, they’re pulling into the Byers’ driveway right behind Joyce’s Pinto. She is surprised to see them arriving so late, but

she smiles when she notices the delight on her youngest son's face. She looks at the coat, then at Hopper, unsure how to feel. Will is right – his new winter coat bears a striking resemblance to Hopper's. Joyce suppresses her instinctual pride, instead relishing the scene of Jim and her boy sharing a happy moment. They enter the warm house together, Joyce hanging back and biting her lip to keep from tearing up.

### 3. Chapter 3

#### December 3: Treatment for a cold

It is unusual for Hopper to arrive late when invited to dinner. Heavy snow has been falling all evening, and as the roads get messier, Joyce grows more anxious. After watching his mother pace between the front window and the kitchen for the tenth time, Jonathan suggests that Hop was probably just scared off by the half-burned chili he was fed last time. Joyce shoots him a dirty look. "That was an accident. I was distracted." Jonathan rolls his eyes, and gives his mother a knowing grin. He remembers exactly what distracted his mother that night, as he was the one to walk in on Hopper kissing Joyce while urgently pressing her against the bathroom sink.

"He's here!" Will calls, spotting headlights in the driveway.

Joyce moves to the door and opens it, struggling for a moment to see anything but darkness and snowfall. Soon she glimpses Jim approaching the house, illuminated by the porch light. Something is wrong. He's unsteady on his feet, and his voice is hoarse when he speaks, "I'm sorry, Joyce. I thought I could do this...but I need to go home." She's convinced that he's drunk, until he starts to cough his throat raw.

When Hopper reaches the front step, Joyce puts her hand to his chest, feeling a dry rattle as he tries to catch his breath. "Hop, you're not going anywhere. Don't try to talk, just come in." She steers him into the house, calling to Jonathan to put on the kettle. Will is so alarmed by Hopper's sickly appearance that he brings his mother a blanket without even being asked.

"Joyce. I'm fine," Hopper rasps. "You and the boys go have your dinner, and I'll just get my contagious ass out of here."

"Are you kidding? I could listen to this new, sexy voice of yours all night," Joyce smiles, helping him out of his coat. She takes his hand and leads him to the couch. "Let me take care of you, will you?"

Hopper collapses onto the sofa with a wheezy sigh of relief, and

Joyce kneels down to remove his boots. He raises a lascivious eyebrow at the sight of her on the floor between his legs, a subtle reminder that while he may be sick, he's certainly not dead. As Jim stretches out on the couch, Joyce covers him with a quilt. The kettle is whistling. "Stay right here, okay?"

"You're a hot nurse, you know."

"Shut up."

Joyce returns to the living room, sets a plate of buttered toast on the coffee table and hands Hopper a warm mug of tea. Taking a sip of the steaming liquid, he groans with pleasure at the exquisite combination of whiskey, honey and lemon. "Christ, Joyce, I don't deserve you." He fixes her with his expressive blue eyes, and it takes all of Joyce's willpower to resist climbing under the blanket with him.

She wanders into the kitchen and eats dinner with her boys. By the time the dishes are being cleared away, Hopper's snore can be heard reverberating off of the living room walls. Will and Jonathan exchange amused looks. Joyce shrugs and leaves the dining room to check on her "patient." The toast and hot toddy have been devoured, and Jim has discarded his sweater on the back of the couch.

"Hop, let's get you to bed," she says softly, tugging back the quilt and touching his arm. He squints up at her, smiles and mutters "sexy nurse" before nodding off again. Joyce lets him be.

She wakes briefly in the wee hours of the morning to a strong arm hugging her close around the waist, and a familiar voice whispering, "Being near you is the best medicine." Joyce isn't even sick, but the warmth of her lover's body still makes her feel better.

## **Notes for the Chapter:**

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## 4. Chapter 4

December 4: Getting the person who doesn't like Christmas into the right festive mood

Only two strands remain. Jonathan prefers to have his feet on solid ground so it Hopper who is perched on the ladder, hammer in hand, nails jingling in his coat pocket. With the remains of a cigarette clamped between his teeth, Jim takes the small tangle of lights from Jonathan's hands, and strings them across a series of nails above the eaves trough.

"You're not really much for Christmas, are you, Hop?"

"What would give you that idea?" Hopper mumbles, taking a quick drag on his smoke as he descends the ladder to move it along a few more feet. He climbs back up and, using more force than is necessary, starts hammering nails into the frame of Joyce's house.

Jonathan shrugs. "I've just never seen anyone look so pissed off while putting up decorations."

"Well, if there's a law against that, I'm sure I would have heard about it," Jim replies, his jaw once again clenched around his cigarette.

Jonathan passes Hopper a final strand of lights. "It means a lot to her that you're doing this. Mom, I mean." Jim's expression softens and he is noticeably more careful with this last bit of ornamentation.

They collapse the ladder and start carrying it back to the shed. At first Jonathan thinks Hop is talking to himself. "Look, kid, the holidays don't have the same feeling once you've spent a few of them in a hospital." He pushes open the shed door and Jonathan helps him maneuver the ladder to its place along the wall.

"I'm sorry. I didn't mean to..." Jonathan stammers.

"Don't be sorry. It's not your fault. Jesus, it's not even my fault." Hopper sighs and starts to make his way back to the house. Jonathan keeps pace, his feet sinking in the deep snow.

It feels wrong for their conversation to end on such a somber note. Before he can stop himself, Jonathan blurts out: "Mom says that the darkest time of the year is meant to remind us of what gives us light."

Hopper stops walking and turns around. "No offense, Jonathan, but I've never taken you for much of an optimist," he remarks, a slight smile tugging at the corner of his mouth.

Jonathan musters his courage before continuing. "All I know is that since you've been around, Mom is different. I think you're her light in the darkness." He can tell that his words have hit a nerve, and although the temperature hasn't dropped in the time that they've been outside, Jonathan finds himself shivering as he awaits Hopper's response. Having spent plenty of time in Jim's company Jonathan is quick to notice how the Chief unconsciously shifts into an authoritative cop stance whenever he's grappling for self control. Hopper is gazing out into the woods, pretending to squint at some object in the distance. He mutters something about the "brutal wind" and quickly dabs his eyes with the fingertips of his glove, even though there hasn't been so much as a light breeze all day.

As they approach the house, Will, El and Joyce come out onto the porch in their coats and boots. "Is it too early to turn them on yet?" Will asks, looking hopefully at the darkening sky of late afternoon.

Hopper clears his throat. "Sure, why not? Jonathan do you want to do the honours?"

The older boy tracks down the outlet, plugs the lights in and then wanders to where his family is taking in the spectacular effect. Hundreds of bright-coloured lights glow along the roof, around the windows, across the shrubbery. The snow around the house is a glittering rainbow. "I love this," Joyce says, softly. "I love this so much." Jonathan turns, expecting to see his mom gazing at the lights, but realizes instead that her eyes have been on Hopper the whole time.

## 5. Chapter 5

### December 5: Snowball Fight

There are rules, and Joyce knows this. Whoever arrives last to the snowball fight consents to being bombarded by all other participants, three shots each. The thing is that she has no intention of joining the battle and, besides, she's an adult - surely there are exemptions. Her only reason for venturing into the back lot at all is to let Will know that Hopper will be here any minute to take her to the movies.

It's early evening and already dark. Joyce scans the woods, surrounded on all sides by snow twinkling in the moonlight. She can hear whispers. "Let's do it." "I won't do it, it's your Mom." Will and Lucas, debating.

Without warning, a damp snowball strikes Joyce in the chest, and she lets out a melodramatic shriek. "Okay, very funny. That was a good one, Will, but I just came out here to tell you..." A second snowball grazes her shoulder. Her son giggles from behind a small snow bank, and Joyce is about to mount a counter attack when she hears footsteps approaching from behind.

Will's third and final projectile is launched, missing Joyce by inches but hitting Hopper directly in the face. "What the hell?" he mutters, dusting bits of ice from his beard. "Joyce, I heard you scream - is everything all right?"

The whispers among the trees have renewed. "Hit the Chief." "No, you hit him." Hopper is the new target, but due to the boys' poor aim - and general anxiety about assaulting an officer of the law - Joyce bears the brunt of the onslaught.

"Hey, hey, hey!" Hopper is saying, each syllable getting progressively louder. "Will! I know you're out there. Give your mother a break."

A grinning Will appears obediently from behind a tree and Joyce informs him of the evening's plan. "The Wheelers are expecting you for dinner at 7. Jonathan will come for you at 9:30. I love you!"

Joyce is shivering as she walks with Hopper through the woods towards the driveway. “I think one of those snowballs got me in the neck, and now my sweater feels disgusting. I’m going to run in and change.”

“Thanks for taking all those shots for me, by the way,” Hopper chuckles. “That was really sweet of you.” Refusing to let Jim off easy, she crouches down, wads up some snow between her mittens and, making as if to put her arm around him, instead pulls back his coat collar and drops the frozen surprise down his back. Hopper shouts something incomprehensible as she makes a run for it, but he doesn’t give much chase. Shaking the snow out of his coat, he calls, “don’t worry, I’ll get you back.” As she heads into the house, he’s standing by his truck, lighting up a smoke.

Joyce has discarded her sweater and is digging through the closet when she hears Hopper come in. She’s unsurprised, as he rarely misses an opportunity to observe her in a state of undress. “I’ll just be a minute, Hop,” she says. In a moment, his hand is on her shoulder, and she turns to face him. He bends to kiss her, softly at first, then with more fervour and Joyce doesn’t notice the snowball in his hand until he is brushing it across her collarbone, sending a trickle of icy water between her breasts. Hopper unhitches her bra and touches the last of the melting snow to her nipple, as Joyce giggles and pants into his mouth.

“I told you I’d get you back,” he whispers into her ear, stooping to lick the cool water from her warm skin. Joyce is quivering, the sensation of Hopper’s tongue giving her body new chills.

“Mmmm. So we’re even. Now you’ve got to warm me up.” Joyce purrs as Hopper glances up at her, and just the suggestive look in his eyes is enough to raise her body temperature by several degrees.

### **Notes for the Chapter:**

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## 6. Chapter 6

December 6: Hot tea and cozy sweaters

After several attempts to properly knock with a massive package in his arms, Hopper relents and gives the Byers' front door a solid kick with the toe of his boot. Will's eyes light up the minute he opens the door. "Whoa, Hop, what is that?" he asks, getting out the Hop's way. Jim sets the large gift-wrapped box down on the kitchen table just as Jonathan comes into the room, the brothers sharing a look of excitement tempered with confusion.

Hopper removes his hat, unzips his coat and collapses into a chair. "I think it's fair to say that Flo outdid herself this year." Lighting up a cigarette, he gestures towards the gift, explaining, "she's going on some Caribbean cruise next week, and she wanted to make sure you guys got this before she went away."

Jonathan suggests that they should wait until their Mom gets home to open it, but Will disagrees. "It's for all of us. I'm sure Mom won't mind." The younger boy can hardly keep his eyes or hands off of the enormous present. "What do you think, sir?"

Jim shrugs and takes a drag, "That's up to you and Jonathan." He's enjoying keeping the kids in suspense, but he's also curious about the contents of the box.

"Okay, Will, go ahead and open it." Jonathan barely gets the words out before his brother tears into the shiny red wrapping paper. Will stops to squint at the images and print on the cardboard, more than a little disappointed.

"She got us a microwave?"

"That doesn't seem like her style," Hopper reasons, setting his cigarette in an ashtray and taking off his coat. "Maybe she just reused the box."

Will grabs some scissors and starts to work on the heavy tape. Within seconds, the box is open, its trove of treasures revealed: small

canisters of raw tea, packets of instant cocoa, tins of homemade almond bark, peanut brittle, maple fudge, shortbread cookies, brownies with candy canes crumbled on top. Hopper and the boys don't know where to begin, so they just dig in, not unlike bears stumbling upon an unattended picnic basket.

"These are amazing!" Will exclaims, around a mouthful of brownie.

Jonathan is less verbally expressive than his brother, but Jim notices the older boy, in an unguarded moment, closing his eyes in quiet ecstasy as he takes a bite of creamy fudge.

"Now, be sure to leave some for your Mom, boys," Hopper smirks, snapping off a chunk of what must be his third piece of peanut brittle.

The Christmas-coloured tins are laid out on the table like a decadent buffet. Will is about to reach for another treat when his eyes wander to the shimmer of cellophane at the bottom of the gift box. "I think there's something else in here," he remarks, pulling back the red plastic. "Holy cow! Take a look at this!"

Jonathan and Hopper recoil in horror at the hand-knitted Christmas sweater Will takes from the box; Flo went to the trouble of making five of them, and although they're beautifully done, they are also hideous.

Will loves the acrylic wonders, and rifling around to find the creation intended for him, he immediately pulls the smallest red jumper over his head, admiring the row of bright green pine trees across the chest. "Isn't this great! Mine's so warm! You guys should put yours on and we can all show Mom when she gets here!" He runs to the bathroom to check himself out in the mirror, leaving Hopper and Jonathan to exchange pained looks.

"I'm not putting that frigging thing on."

"Not even for your little brother?"

"No way. What about you?"

"Nope. It's your colour."

“Black is my colour.”

“Black is the absence of colour, actually.”

“Those sweaters are the absence of taste.”

“Fair enough.”

Will returns, looking dismayed that Hopper and Jonathan haven’t complied with his request. “Come on, guys. Mom would love it! You know how much she loves Christmas stuff. Look at this – Flo put little sparkly beads on the trees!”

It is difficult to resist the enthusiasm of a little boy who such a short time ago was trapped in a terrifying netherworld. Ultimately, Hopper and Jonathan put on the atrocious sweaters – yes, even Hopper’s has the beads on the trees – and it’s at that exact moment that Joyce and El walk in and promptly burst out laughing. Hopper and Jonathan are the portrait of misery.

When Joyce catches her breath, she hugs her radiant youngest son. “Oh my God! You guys look hilarious! I love it! When did you get these? Hopper – your face is perfect right now. Jonathan, could you get your camera? We need to get a picture...”

“Um, Mom, I’d really rather not...”

“Okay, okay. But promise me you’ll wear them for dinner tonight. This is the best thing I’ve seen all day.” Eleven is already pushing her arms into the sleeves of her sweater as Joyce wanders to the kitchen, all the while praising Flo’s generosity and talent. When she spots the gift tag on the table – “To Joyce and Family” - her hand touches her heart and she gazes warmly at the ridiculously-dressed foursome devouring shortbread in her kitchen. Tears are pricking her eyes as she pulls her sweater over her head. Everything fits better than she had expected.

## **Notes for the Chapter:**

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## 7. Chapter 7

December 7: Giving subtle hints of what one would like to get for Christmas

The key to catching the whole conversation is to turn up the kitchen radio a notch or two just as Will starts talking. Hopper answers the boy's questions more candidly when he thinks that Joyce is listening to music rather than eavesdropping. These chats – or interrogation sessions, as Jim calls them – are always interesting, since Will's innocent curiosity softens Hopper's tendency towards gruff, monosyllabic answers.

Joyce is preparing dinner, shaking raw chicken drumsticks in a plastic bag of breadcrumbs as she goes to listen in at the doorway to the living room. Peering around the corner, she sees Hopper and Will watching some dull police drama. Hop is making his usual commentary about how shabbily cops are portrayed on television. "Look at this guy – you can't go into something like that without calling for back up. What's he gonna do - solve the whole thing by himself?"

Will listens to Hopper's observations for a while before he begins his inquiry as he always does. "Sir, can I ask you something?"

Hopper's response is equally predictable. "Call me anything but "sir", and you can ask me whatever you want."

"Hop, is this what you do at your place – watch shows like this?"

"No, I can't. My TV's broken," Hopper explains, failing to add that his television was among the casualties of a half-deranged search for surveillance equipment.

"So you'd rather watch TV at our house than get yours fixed?"

Joyce has never heard her son ask about Hopper's place before, and wonders where this line of questioning is headed.

"It's much easier to watch a show on an unbroken TV," comes



Hopper's cryptic response.

"Well, yeah," Will laughs. "But you also like watching TV here, right?"

"Sure. Especially when I find myself answering so many questions that I can't even follow the plot anymore." Hopper's manner is sarcastic but not unkind.

"What do you make for dinner at your house?"

It is becoming clear to Joyce that Will is trying to gauge Hopper's feelings about the time he spends at the Byers' place. Joyce and Hop have been seeing each other for almost a month now but they haven't broached the topic of where their relationship is headed. Will is boldly going where Joyce has feared to tread.

"I'm not much of a cook but I make a lot of sandwiches," Hopper replies. From the amused tone in his voice, Joyce senses that Hop is also catching on to the objective of Will's questions.

"You eat sandwiches for dinner every day? That must get boring." Will draws out this last word in a theatrical way. "I bet you've hardly ever had the same thing here even once, because whenever you're coming over, Mom pulls out her recipe books and tries to find something special, even if it's a different meatloaf."

"Oh, she does, does she?" Hopper chuckles. Joyce can just picture the wicked grin on Jim's face - the adorable dimples, the crinkles around his eyes - and she can't stop blushing. She moves away from the doorway, places the chicken carefully into a baking dish and slides it into the open oven.

As she re-approaches the doorway, Joyce can hear her son expounding on the ridiculous things that his mother does when she's expecting Hopper's company. "She's always really happy and nervous. Sometimes she even bumps into things, or trips over the dog. She keeps checking herself in the bathroom. It's pretty funny, when she's so excited like that."

Joyce feels like a teenager again, hiding behind her locker while

blabbermouth Karen goes right up to James Hopper and tells him that Joyce has a notebook with just his name in it, written over and over.

She can hear Hopper lighting a cigarette as he digests this new information. He takes a drag, and says, with the smoke still in his mouth, "Does your Mom know that you're telling me all this stuff?"

Following Hopper's lead, Joyce reaches for her Camels, and lighting up with shaking hands, moves back towards the hallway. Will's voice has gotten quieter and Joyce strains to hear him. "She would never tell you this stuff, because she probably doesn't want you to know how much she likes you. But I think it's important, and that's why I'm telling you."

The water Joyce has been heating for rice starts to boil over and Joyce runs to pull the pot from the burner. She wipes up the mess with a cloth, cigarette clenched between her teeth, cussing under her breath and lamenting that she'd taken such trouble to teach her boys that honesty is the best policy. Setting the rice on the stove to cook, she turns back to the doorway, her breath catching when she discovers Hopper standing there with a smug, sexy smile on his face.

"I think your son just gave me the old "what are your intentions with my mother?" talk," he says. The twinkle in his eye assures her that he knows she's been listening all along.

Joyce takes the last drag of her cigarette, and puts it out clumsily in the ashtray. "And just what are your intentions, Hop?" she asks, trying for nonchalance.

Jim comes towards her and puts his hands on her waist, holding her gaze. "I intend to stick around as long as the thought of me makes you trip over the dog. And probably longer than that." He puts a finger under her chin, and tips her face up to him. Joyce is sniffing a little, but he kisses her anyway. She can hardly get enough of his soft lips and rough beard against her mouth.

When she opens her eyes, Joyce is alarmed to spy Will coming into the kitchen, a little smile on his face. "Merry Christmas, you crazy kids!" he giggles.

## Notes for the Chapter:

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## 8. Chapter 8

December 8: Decoration wars (must include glitter)

Highway patrol is never an enjoyable experience, but it's especially unpleasant at this time of year. There haven't been any collisions tonight, but Hopper has spent the better part of his shift radioing tow trucks to pull vehicles out of snowy ditches. The visibility is lousy, the roads are coated in black ice – why can't people just heed the local news warnings and stay home? Callahan's voice comes over the two-way reporting for duty, and Jim couldn't be more relieved to call it a night.

The evening has been a long, lonely one, and returning to an empty house is the last thing Hopper needs right now. It's late and Joyce isn't expecting him, but he decides to try his luck anyway. When he pulls into the Byers' driveway, he is pleased to see the house is illuminated, both inside and out.

Jonathan answers the door. "Hey Hop, you're just in time," he smirks. "Mom and Will are making Christmas decorations." He rolls his eyes and wanders off to his room where he has clearly been sequestering himself rather than participating in the festivities.

The living room feels warm and lively, twinkling with colourful lights along the ceiling, candlelight on the tables, Bing and Bowie crooning on the radio. Hopper is stomping the snow from his boots when Joyce walks in, her smile glowing brighter than anything else in the room. "Well, this is a pleasant surprise – but seriously, Hop, what are you doing out here tonight? Aren't the roads terrible?"

Jim relates some of the mundane details of his shift as he removes his hat, coat, and boots, loving the look of undisguised hunger on Joyce's face as she watches him undress. He's tempted to start unbuttoning the shirt of his uniform just to see her reaction, but before he has the chance, Will walks into the room.

"Hey, sir, are you up for doing a bit of decorating?" His face, hair and clothing give off an unnatural shimmer, causing Hopper's heart to skip a beat. "Chief, is there something wrong?"

Jim clears his throat. Joyce and Will are gazing at him with such genuine concern that a lie would be inappropriate. "This...the glitter," he begins, gesturing at Will's sparkling form. "You reminded me of Sarah just now. Glitter was one of her favourite things." As Hopper explains, he's not even getting choked up, which is surprising. "The first year she was in the hospital, her mom and I brought her a craft kit, and a bag of sparkles burst open all over her bed. The three of us couldn't stop laughing, but I don't think the nurses ever forgave us." He's chuckling, even as he wipes a tear from the corner of his eye.

Joyce snuffles, her lips pressed together in a little, compassionate smile. She takes his hand, gives it a squeeze, and leads him into the kitchen, where every inch of the table is covered in cranberries, popcorn, golden thread and, of course, glitter. "Less eating, more stringing," Joyce scolds, pretending to glare at Will as he tips his head back and deposits a handful of popcorn into his mouth. His eyes widen and he gives her an exaggerated shrug. Hopper isn't much for crafting, but he happily lights a smoke and settles into a chair to watch mother and son create together.

By half past eleven, both boys have retired for the night, and Joyce and Hopper are alone in the candlelit living room smoking and sipping spiked hot chocolate. "Thank you, by the way," Joyce says softly. "For sharing that story about Sarah tonight. I know it probably would have been easier to bullshit us, but you didn't, and that means a lot."

"Pretending not to care is the hardest thing I've ever tried to do. Talking to you and Will about Sarah felt like finally exhaling a breath I've been holding for years." There is a comfortable silence as they finish their cigarettes. Hopper is in such an incredible mood that when "Leather & Lace" starts up on the radio, he asks Joyce to dance. "Come on, I know you love this one," he cajoles, taking her hands and pulling her to her feet.

Joyce rests her cheek against his chest, whisper-singing some of the Stevie Nicks parts, which is both sexy and adorable. Hopper kisses the top of her head, his hand at her waist reaching around to grab her ass. Joyce looks up at him, amused but unsurprised. "Is that your subtle way of suggesting that we dance our way to the bedroom?"

“Maybe.”

“You have glitter in your beard.”

“Perfect. Then you should be sparkling like a Christmas tree by the time I’m done with you.”

## 9. Chapter 9

### December 9: Sleigh Ride

The Hawkins Santa Claus parade was one of the most anticipated events of the year, drawing a crowd the likes of which the town rarely saw. Joyce was required to work an extended shift on the day of the parade, as were most of her co-workers, but she didn't mind. She liked the parade; the marching bands, the hokey floats, the flushed faces of little ones exhilarated by fresh air, candy canes and warm cocoa.

Nothing gave Joyce a greater thrill than the sight of St. Nick himself, and more specifically, the sight of his grand red sled gliding by on its wheeled trailer. Every time Joyce laid eyes on the iconic vehicle – decked out with jingling bells, black leather reins and plush red interior – her heart beat a little faster and her work tunic began to feel a bit too warm.

Perhaps Joyce should have felt uncomfortable possessing impure associations with a symbol of such innocent tradition, but she couldn't help it. The mere mention of the parade transported her back to a night spent trying to shake the restlessness of being eighteen in a dead end town - a night spent with Jim Hopper, as naughty as it was nice.

She never did learn how Hopper acquired the keys to the warehouse. When asked about it, he just shot her a sexy, mischievous grin. "I'm good at finding things," he shrugged, slipping the key into the padlock.

The building's interior was unheated and completely dark. "If I'd known how cold it would be in here I would have worn an extra sweater," she whispered.

"For what I have in mind, the less clothing the better," Hopper replied, and Joyce's whole body flushed with anticipation.

When Jim disappeared from her side, she was so terrified that she almost called out, her fear of being alone nearly outranking her fear

of being discovered trespassing. The flick of a switch echoed in the massive room, a single floodlight illuminating a far corner of the space; and there it was – Santa’s sleigh, in all of its twinkling, scarlet glory. As her eyes adjusted to the light, Hopper reappeared, took her hand, and led her in the direction of the float.

Jim climbed in first then helped her up, Joyce all the while struggling to suppress her laughter. “Hop, you’re really something, you know that?” He fell casually back onto the cushy red velvet seat, causing the vehicle to jingle its many bells. “This isn’t going to work,” Joyce giggled. “We’re going to get busted for sure if this thing chimes like a church every time we move.”

“Let’s be really still, then,” Jim whispered, pulling her down next to him and kissing her mouth while his gloved fingers unbuttoned her coat. “We’ll make a game of it. Whenever one of us makes a movement that rings the bells, that person has to remove an item of clothing...”

“That would be more fun if it wasn’t freezing in here.”

“Joyce, my dear, that IS the fun of it. Look, I rang the bells first, so I’ll start.” Hopper removed one of his gloves with a flourish, then immediately slid his warm, bare hand up under Joyce’s sweater and camisole. She gasped and drew back too quickly. Jim laughed and Joyce discarded one of her mittens.

They kissed, Joyce feeling an electric rush between her legs as his tongue slipped into her mouth. Choosing her moment, she carefully rested her icy cold mitten-free fingers on the back of his exposed neck and Hopper gave a little yelp, setting the bells tinkling again. He stood up, dutifully taking off his other glove then, holding Joyce’s attention with his hot blue gaze, seized the edges of the sleigh, giving it an aggressively deliberate shake.

“Hey! Hopper you can’t –“ but Jim had already shucked off his coat, the roguish grin never leaving his face.

“There’s no rule that we can’t speed things along a bit,” he remarked, sitting down next to her, careful not to jangle the bells. Joyce shot him a mock glare that dissolved into a smile as he drew her close and



began to kiss her neck. Hopper was clean-shaven in those days, but on this particular night there was a hint of stubble on his chin. The bristles against her skin were already giving her shivers when he began to nibble her earlobe. Her breath was coming in short, steamy gasps, but still the bells didn't sound. Joyce was determined to make him work for it.

Jim's hands slid up her skirt, along her pantyhose and at first Joyce thought he was going to tug them down by the waistband. Instead, he happened upon a series of runs striating from the crotch of her hose, and with a quick rip found himself one layer away from the heat between her legs. "Fuck, Hop! What are you doing?" she stage whispered, sitting up too abruptly. Jingle, jingle.

"Don't worry, Joyce," Hopper said kindly. "I'll get you a new pair for Christmas. I promise." She stood up gingerly, tossed her remaining mitten to the floor of the sleigh, and straddled his legs in a reckless manner guaranteed to ring the bells. Shrugging her coat from her shoulders, she pressed her body to his, grinding her hips against him subtly enough that the bells remained silent. Through with playing fair, Hopper's fingers found the tear in Joyce's pantyhose, pushed aside the crotch of her panties and penetrated her wet slit.

Joyce groaned with pleasure, her body jerking forward with a force to shake all the bells. She happily paid the toll, employing the old change room stunt of unhitching her bra and tugging it through her sleeve without removing her sweater. "Well played," Hopper grinned, roaming under her camisole and massaging her bare breasts with his chilly hands.

Impatience set in and Joyce undid Hopper's pants without a care for the jingling of the sled. Jim pulled a rubber from his pocket, and soon Joyce was settling herself down on his ready prick. She rode him, in her torn stockings, her panties still on, the bells ringing in her ears, his breath hot and misty on her throat as she climaxed.

Then she was on all fours, moaning with each slap of his hips against her ass, the red velvet soft on her nyloned knees, the jangle of the sleigh increasing as Hopper reached his peak with a low growl.

Moments later, an authoritative voice was shouting at them from the

surrounding darkness. They scrambled to recover their clothing as all of the lights in the warehouse came on. Jumping down from the sleigh and pulling on their coats, they made a run for the back door, intoxicated with their own recklessness.

At a safe distance from the building, they stopped to catch their breath. Hopper lit a cigarette and they passed it between them as they walked through their sleepy town, breaking into giggles each time their eyes met.

“Hey Joyce, I’m not sure what’s so funny, but I’ve got a line up over here. Would you mind opening your till?” Donald was glaring from his register. Joyce got back to work, the smile never leaving her face, lost in thoughts of jingling bells and laughing all the way.

## 10. Chapter 10

December 15: Getting Snowed in Together

Jonathan and Will had joined the Wheelers for dinner, leaving Joyce with a rare night to herself. Heavy snow fell for the better part of the evening, and she sat curled up on the couch reading Stephen King, pausing occasionally to take in the enchanting landscape outside her living room window.

The weather report on the hi-fi was just announcing road closures when the power went out. Feeling her way through the darkness to the kitchen, Joyce patted down the counter until her fingers closed around a box of matches. Moving about the living room, she lit tapers and tealights, trying not to panic. Unlikely as it was that Jonathan would attempt to drive home in these conditions, her eldest might take certain risks to save his mother from worry.

Joyce paced in the candlelight for a moment before picking up the phone to call Karen, only to discover that the lines were down. Although she knew that it would be best to stay put and trust the Wheelers' to invite Jonathan and Will to spend the night, patience had never been Joyce's strong suit. Taking up a candle, she began looking for her keys, prepared to brave the stormy night to ensure her sons' safety. A knock at the door stopped her in her tracks.

Hopper let himself in, his handsome features flushed and glistening with melting ice. "Hey Joyce, are you all right? I've been patrolling since the outage and Karen wanted me to pass on the message that the boys are staying at their place tonight." Noticing the keys in Joyce's hand, he added, "So you don't need to go and do anything –"

"Crazy?" Joyce offered.

"Rash," Hopper corrected.

Her mind at ease, Joyce set the keys and candle down on the coffee table. "So things are pretty messy out there, huh? You've probably got a long night ahead of you."

“Actually, this is my last stop,” he replied, taking off his gloves and raising a suggestive eyebrow. “But having a long night ahead of me doesn’t sound half bad.”

Joyce was so pleased that she had to bite her lip to keep from squealing. As she hung up Jim’s coat, a familiar jangle in the pocket gave her a wonderfully wicked idea. Few people knew about Hopper’s habit of carrying an extra set of handcuffs, a holdover practice from his time as a “big city cop.” Joyce was eager to use this fun bit of trivia for her own carnal purposes.

She discreetly removed the cuffs from Hopper’s coat pocket into the sleeve of her sweater, accomplishing this sleight of hand just as Hopper put his hands on her waist, bending to kiss her neck. Her skin to prickled all over as his fingers moved up under the front of her sweater, cupping her breasts through her thin cotton bra. Still, Joyce pulled away, resisting the intense urge to let Jim fuck her right there on the living room floor.

“Let’s go to the bedroom,” she said, the husky tone in her voice betraying her arousal.

“We’ve got the whole house, Joyce. What do you say we start out here, and see where we end up?” Hopper mumbled against her temple, working on the button of her jeans. Seizing him by the collar of his uniform, Joyce brought him down to her level, hissing softly into his ear, “Tonight I’d like to put a few notches in MY bedpost, for a change.” She took up a candle and wandered to her boudoir, a curious but bewildered Jim following her lead.

In the warm glow of firelight, Joyce fell back on the bed, and watched as Jim laid his utility belt – including the second set of handcuffs - on her dresser. He settled down next to her, running his hands through her hair, but she withdrew from the kiss, producing the handcuffs from her sleeve with a magician’s bravado. “Baby, I thought you’d never ask,” Hopper drawled, reaching for the cuffs.

“They’re for you, actually, Hop. That is, if you trust me,” Joyce whispered, her tone at once sexy and mischievous. Without waiting for a response, she straddled him and began to unbutton his uniform. “You have the right to remain silent. Anything you say can and will

be used against you...”

Jim sat up to help her remove his shirt. “I don’t even know what the charges are, but I have a feeling that silence is out of the question,” he said, the slightest tremor in his voice. Joyce, thrilled to have her lover in suspense, jumped up from the bed and grabbed the second pair of restraints.

His head settled back on a pillow, Hopper could hardly keep the smile from his face as Joyce snapped the cuffs onto his wrists, fastening him to the rungs of her headboard. She playfully dragged her fingernails along his arms, feeling his muscles tense by reflex, turned on by the clink of metal against wood. She stood up beside the bed and undressed slowly, relishing the hungry look in Jim’s eyes. “Well, this seems pretty unfair,” he muttered with mock exasperation.

When at last Joyce climbed onto the bed, Hopper was so desperate to touch her that he audibly sighed with relief. She sat astride his stomach facing away from him then tucked her ankles under his taut biceps and lowered herself onto his mouth. Jim obliged her without question, his tongue eagerly exploring the tender ache between her thighs.

Joyce leaned forward against Jim’s body, resting her elbows on either side of his hips. Just as she was trying to get his pants undone, Hopper closed his lips around her clit and began to give her a little suck. Even in a position of vulnerability, he was still capable of making her weak. Joyce pressed her pussy into his mouth until she couldn’t take anymore, withdrawing just before she let go completely.

Joyce knelt beside him and removed the rest of his clothing. Now it was Hopper’s turn to feel powerless. The temperature in the house was dropping, but the sight of Jim naked and restrained to her bed made Joyce feel hot all over. Holding his gaze the entire time, she wrapped her lips around the head of his cock, causing him to growl and wrench involuntarily in the cuffs. Taking her sweet time, she eased her lips down his length, his engorged prick getting even harder as she lightly grazed his shaft with her teeth.

Joyce could hear Jim’s voice in her ears, mostly expletives and

unholy invocations. “Baby, please! The keys are on my belt...you’ve got to....oh, fuuuck!”

Mercifully, Joyce released her prisoner, who showed his gratitude by throwing her down on her back, tossing her ankles onto his shoulders and filling her with every last inch of his desire. Hopper matched each thrust with a thumb’s stroke against her swollen clit until she climaxed beneath him, her back arching, a guttural moan escaping her lips.

Releasing her legs, Hopper continued to grind against Joyce’s hips, gripping her ass and pulling her into him until he too reached his peak, their bodies fused together with sweat.

He collapsed onto the bed, his chest heaving. “Jesus Christ, Joyce. I don’t know if you just good-copped or bad-copped me, but I love the way you press charges.”

## 11. Chapter 11

### December 11 - Christmas Shopping

They were sitting in the parking lot, the truck still running. Hopper turned down the heat and began to tap the steering wheel along to “Jingle Bell Rock” as it murmured from the speakers. Joyce was smoking in the fierce way she had, trying to muster her nerve. “I just hate the city,” she muttered. “I think it’s the crowds.”

Hopper nodded slowly. “I know. I wouldn’t have insisted, but some of the stuff on the kids’ lists...just can’t be found in Hawkins.” He sat forward awkwardly, the better to remove some crumpled scraps of paper from the rear pocket of his jeans. Unfurling one sheet, he squinted at his nearly indecipherable printing. “Jesus, I can’t even read half of what Jonathan told me to get El.”

Joyce mashed out her cigarette in the overfull ashtray. “Okay, fuck it. Let’s go. It just wouldn’t be Christmas without a panic attack, right?” Gripping her purse in one hand, she yanked on the door handle and exited the vehicle.

This didn’t sound promising, but Jim turned off the truck and followed her as she charged through the packed parking lot towards the mall. He took her mittened hand and gave it a squeeze as they entered the complex, which was not unlike a massive ant farm. Hopper knew that busy places made Joyce anxious but the truth was that he missed the bustle and energy of his time in the city. He suppressed a smile lest Joyce think he was laughing at her.

They wandered among the throng of frenzied shoppers, rolling their eyes at the grouchy ones, exchanging a sweet look as they passed ecstatic children in line to see Santa. With each item checked off of their respective lists, Joyce became less cagey, even humming along with Nat King Cole as they strolled through Sears. “Do you think El would like one of these?” she asked, gesturing at a waffle maker on a display shelf. “I mean, is she completely attached to eating those frozen ones?”

Jim gave a shrug and a little sigh; Joyce read his mind. “You know,

you're right. Your place is pretty small. Maybe we could keep it at my house?"

To be honest, more and more things were being "kept" at Joyce's house as of late: toothbrushes, Jim's razor, El's scrapbooking supplies, 'spare' boots and coats and socks. Distracted by these thoughts, Jim was surprised to see Joyce still gazing up at him, waiting for an answer.

"Yeah, sure. You two can start burning food together for a change..." Joyce gave him her usual punch in the shoulder and he tucked the unwieldy appliance box under his arm.

They paused their adventure for a snack in the food court. It pleased Hopper to note that Joyce was finally at ease, grinning at him over her hot chocolate, gleefully crumbling candy cane over the whipped cream. "This was a good idea, Hop. Sorry I was such a mess earlier."

He took a sip of coffee then shook his head. "Joyce, you weren't a mess. These kinds of places get to lots of people. Not just at this time of year either..." As he spoke, Joyce had dipped a finger into her whipped cream and was now licking it off, slowly. Her brown eyes flickered with sexy mischief and Hopper had to look away, a slight blush on his cheeks. "Christ, Joyce, behave yourself."

"What are you going to do? Put me on the naughty list?" she giggled, quickly finishing her drink.

Picking up their various bags, they headed to their final destination: the music store. Both Will and El had asked for Madonna LPs, which were easy enough to track down. Joyce plucked Cyndi Lauper's "She's So Unusual" from the bestseller shelf; this item was at the very top of El's list and she had even gone to the trouble of putting five stars next to it, refusing to say why.

Jonathan, emphatic about not limiting El's music collection to "shitty pop," was sure to provide Jim with some recommendations and Hopper had scribbled down the band names before he and Joyce headed out of town. Now as he roamed the aisles of the store with an increasingly perplexed look on his face, he realized that he would have to do something he absolutely despised: ask someone for



directions.

As he approached the young woman behind the counter Jim observed that she wore a lot of make up, even more jewelry and a sour expression. It occurred to him that this 'bitchin' look was very popular with young people these days, but he kept this thought to himself. "Hi, uh, Mandi," he said, glancing at her name tag. "I'm looking for a record for my daughter, but I can't seem to find this band anywhere. Am I just out of luck?" He reluctantly handed over the slip of paper covered in his chicken scratch.

Mandi popped her gum. "Is this some kind of joke?" she asked, pencilled eyebrows raised.

"Uh, no, no joke," Jim stammered, as Joyce came to stand at his side. "To be honest, I've never heard of them either."

Mandi smiled - a shocking, beautiful thing. "Sir, we don't have this exact thing, but can I make a suggestion?" She pulled a record from the rack behind her and placed it on the counter.

Realizing his mistake, Jim chuckled and reached for his wallet but Joyce was confused. "Hop, what's so funny?"

The clerk handed Joyce the note, which read: The Smiths, the Cure, Suzy and the Bedsheets.

### **Author's Note:**

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